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Lace Work

in the

Field of Decoration

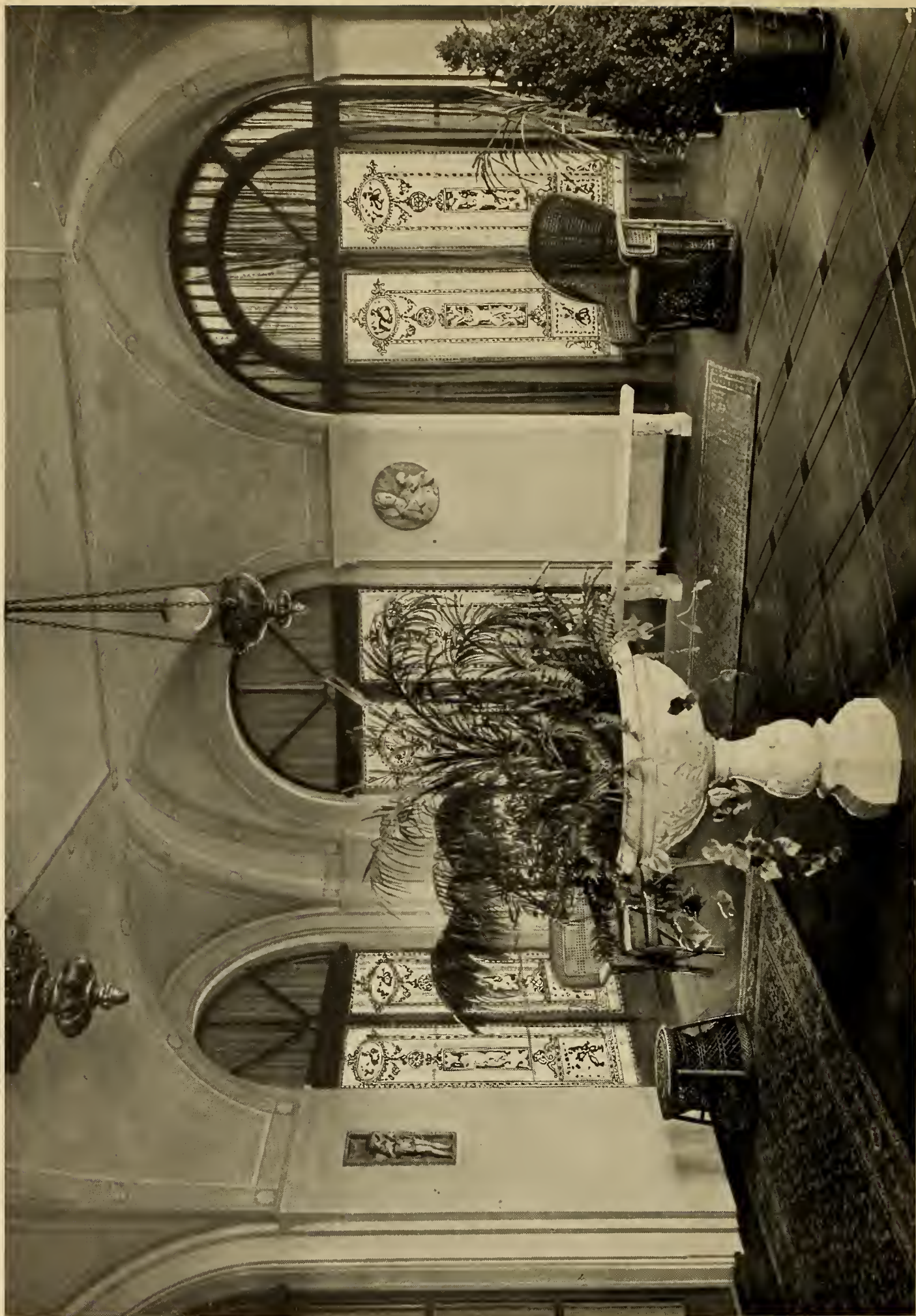


JOHN F. PATCHING

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Lace Work
in the
Field of Decoration





A PORCH INTERIOR

Showing panels of lace-work in the doors, with medallions of Italian fillet and Venetian needlepoint: The classic grace of the setting is reflected in the lines of the lace-work.

Lace Work in the Field of Decoration

By

John F. Patching



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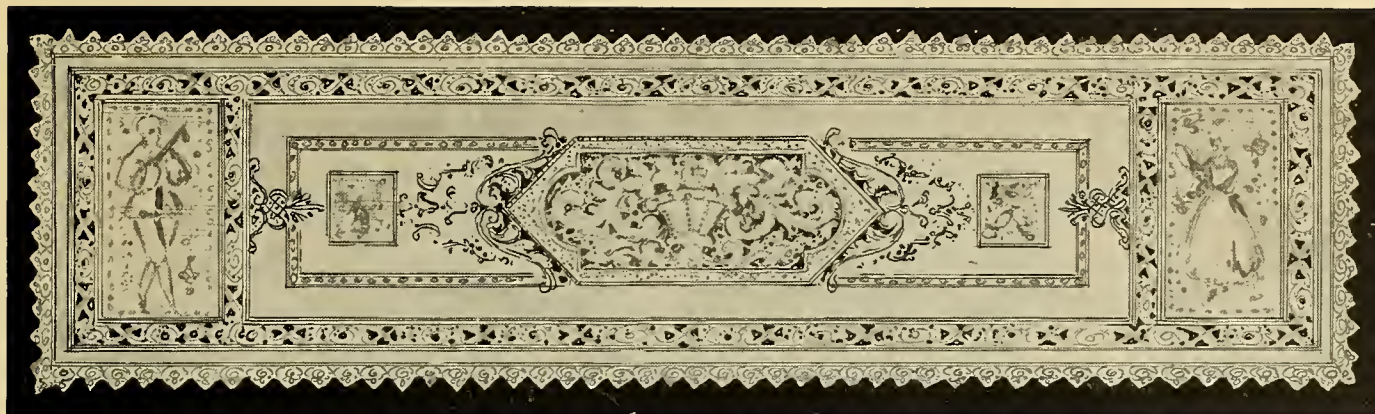


AN OLD ENGLISH HALL INTERIOR

Against the checkered panes of whose windows are hung half panels of silk and old lace of heavy and bold design.

Interior by "The Stanton Studios"

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AN ORNAMENT OF LACE FOR A WIDE TRANSOM LIGHT

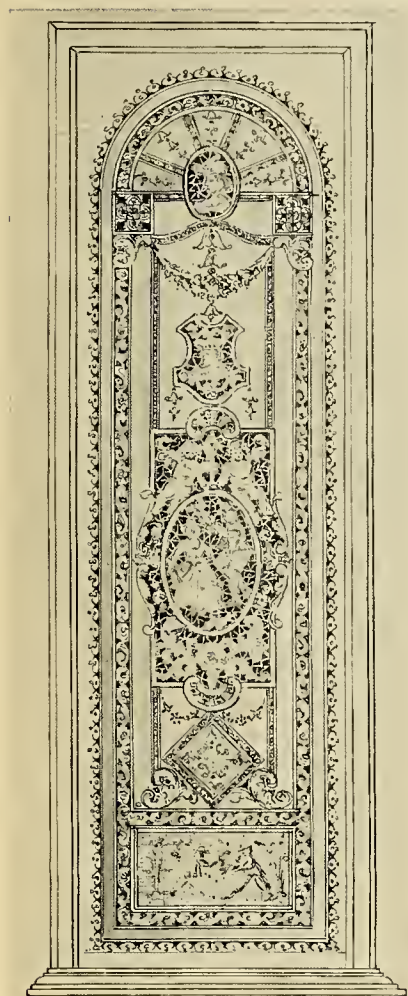
WINDOW LACES

I

SOME things in buildings are necessary to their stability and safe habitation, others merely minister to our aesthetic pleasure, not even secondary factors in a structural sense, but certainly primary factors in rendering our surroundings attractive, our dwellings tenantable. With these elements

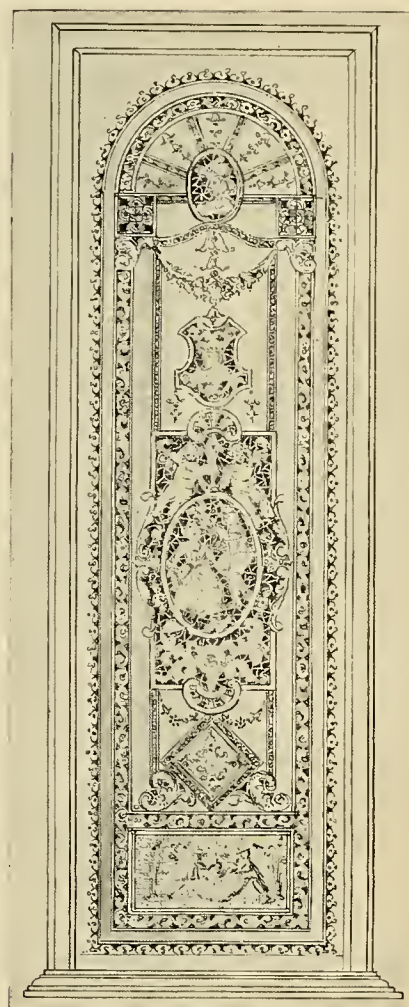
in our comfort and well-being which remain subordinate, however welcome in the modern scheme of life, may be counted the Lace Curtains that soften the glare of day inside our houses, and help to make our window openings things of beauty from within and from without.

All who have studied intelligently, that is, without prejudice, the question of the use and abuse of window laces, are agreed that Lace Curtains, sufficiently well designed to be things of beauty in themselves may and do play no mean or unwelcome part in both adorning and lending a sense of comfort and grace to the home. We have only to contemplate an empty



LACE PANELS FOR GROUPED WINDOWS

These panels suggest their use grouped in pairs at French casement windows opening on a city street.



LACE PANELS FOR GROUPED WINDOWS

In these the artist has sought to interpret something of the spirit of the Italian Renaissance, expressed in the medium of real laces from Florence, Venice and Milan.

house with its dead, blank and expressionless windows to realize how very much a tasteful scheme of curtaining enhances the attractiveness of any architectural opening.

Window laces are a decorative adjunct of double importance, for, unlike other details of furnishing, they are related both to the inside and to the outside of the house they adorn, so while they may be in complete harmony with the interior decoration, they are able also to convey a kinship with the exterior architecture of the building, of which the curtained interior is a part.

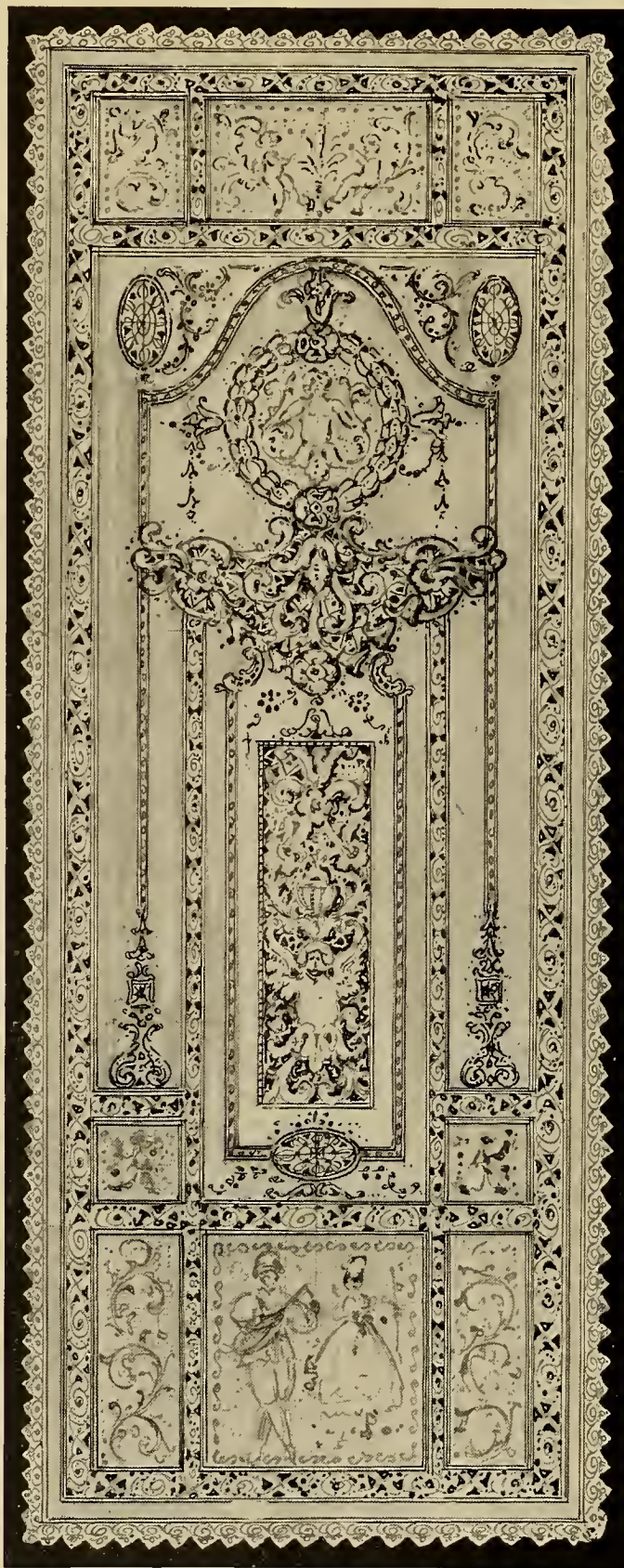
A successful curtain treatment is pleasant from without by reason of the beauty of the pattern seen behind the glass; while from within, the light is agreeably softened though not dulled by the curtains. The tracery of the lace pattern against the

light in itself is beautiful, emphasizing in a delicate and unobtrusive fashion the

dominant ornamental key-note in the decoration of the room. For openings that give upon displeasing scenes, as is the case in so many city apartments, laces at the windows offer a gratifying relief in the cheerful and graceful screen they make, hiding from view unsightly exterior surroundings without reducing or shading the light.

Laces today have won their way in the face of prejudice as window adornments through their sheer appealing beauty and fitness. Today no well appointed house is considered complete, or truly homelike, until its windows are relieved of their dead blankness by attractive laces used either as

panels or as pairs of curtains. A face, the eyes of which lack eye lashes, is as bereft as a house



Here in Flanders and Italian point is shown a rich design for the main doorway of a mansion: It seems to suggest a noble dwelling of stone and marble—it seems made for an entrance, as inviting in its welcome as its architectural lines are lovely.

whose windows are uncurtained. Laces in furnishing have as rightful a place as verdure on tree branches, as clouds against the sky; they bear a message of reticence and refinement discreetly hinting of beauty within and without.

Curtains at our windows are as carpets on our floors, or as hangings on our walls. They tend to soften the geometrical squareness of the window openings, and filter the light. If tastefully designed, they take their just place gracefully in the decorative scheme of the room or dwelling and contribute in no small degree to that sense of satisfactory completeness which a well decorated home inspires.

Laces, with certain other decorative details, sound the feminine note in decoration; in their suave and yielding nature as in their airy delicacy and fine restraint, they epitomize much that is charming in woman.

That this character is really worthy of attention and development is well illustrated in the domain where mere man exercises unhindered control and

in whose uncompromising surroundings the appeal of externals is unconsidered. An atmosphere of severity, if not of brusqueness, pervades his chosen haunts; and while the chairs in which he ensconces his person may be soft and yielding, this is the softness

of physical comfort only, and there are too often lacking in his surroundings those most subtle refinements and elegances which betoken a higher and finer plane of existence. The so-called den is too often a realm of harsh disorder, though apparently adapted to the free and easy shirt-sleeve habits of the male. This, however, is hardly the atmosphere for the full and free growth and expression of wholesome ideas in decoration, and, if we can imagine the entire house conforming to the

den standard and traditions, we shall have conceived a home world aesthetically barren and spiritually dead. If we are prepared to argue that beauty neither has nor need have an abiding place, either in our lives or in our homes, it would be folly to discuss



LACE PANELS AT A GREAT STAIR WINDOW

The tasteful use of laces is well illustrated in this view of a light-flooded lofty hall. The richness of the pattern is subdued, and composes into the picture pleasantly but without insistence.

At the doors appear two panels similar in character to the large one shown on the opposite page.

even briefly the value of such a palpably fine accessory as Lace Curtains in the vital scheme of things.

Happily for most of us beauty does not fail in the potency of its appeal. While we are not all yet sufficiently advanced to realize in all things the oneness of truth and beauty, most of us do recognize their kinship and in striving for the one seek to realize the other. Beauty that is only skin-deep and not based on fitness and sincerity will not satisfy us long. Its call must come from *within*, and not be a mere echo of something quite foreign and external to us. And this is not denying that some of the most entirely successful effects in decoration are based on reflections of the natural world without, interpreted in terms of beautiful line and mass and color, but always suffused with deeper meanings that well only from the soul of man.

II

In minting the pure gold of infinite beauty into the duller currency of so-called decoration for the home, success can be hoped for only when there is some clear harmony of thought and vision, so that

The lace panel illustrated here would be only suitable at the windows of a large hall or salon of formal use and character and of architectural importance. As one of a series it would gain greatly in charm and dignity by repetition.



the natural scenes reach us through a pure spirit and a mind uncorrupted. The setting in one case may be so vast and overwhelming, scenically as grand as a glimpse of white mountain peaks down a green valley, where a river flows with the tint and chill of glaciers to the sea. The frame may be so big that by no effort can we find the "scale" to set it down within the limits of our dwelling's walls. Only a little of the pure emotion it inspires may breathe into our work a message of beauty that must last for long. With the growth of the art sense among the people, the need has arisen for its better expression in the home and its intimate surroundings. Decoration, after all, is only the cover-

ing of the dry bones of necessary construction with the lovely integument of line, form, color and texture serving to bring us into closer and friendlier relation with the places we live in, and providing with life and beauty that which without it would be meaningless and dead.

Though the windows serve as eyes to the dwelling, their function is neither interrupted nor depressed by the use of laces about them. Lace curtains typify the veil, and this is no dead symbolism; throughout all nature the thought of half concealment and its charm and suggestion is brought home to us. It is expressed in the mists that veil the distance, in the leaves that clothe the branches of the trees, the ripples that break the sea-mirror of the cloudy sky, the herbage that softens the stern outlines of the granite rocks, the dancing cataracts of water among the boulders of a stream, in the soft plumage and the down of birds. In the haunting mystery of music the under and the overtones softly woo us, we know not why nor whither, except that in these life is borne on waves of truest harmony into our inmost souls.

III

The making of laces for decoration is more than a business; it is an art craft, a highly specialized and expert industry, in which long years of experience and a



A three-quarter curtain of fine silk and delicate lace, designed for the glass doors so frequently used between rooms in large apartments and hung by ivory rings from rods of wood or metal.

genuine art sense and training are requisites. Our own business is the result of twenty-five years of practical experience, and a long and thorough training in the schools of art and the ateliers of Europe. Today the products of our studios vie with the best work done abroad and in certain respects surpass it. This is true not only of the artistic or pictorial merit of the designs but especially of the workmanship, finish and excellence of the materials employed. In these respects our best American-made lace decorations exceed in merit and value the very best produced in France, Italy and Belgium.

The possibilities of this rather individual art have been realized and extended by us until the curtains, panels, bed sets, etc., made in our workrooms will bear comparison with even the exhibition pieces produced in France or Italy.

With other considerations we bear closely in mind the relation of architecture and general decoration to the art we follow. The deeper we have delved and the further we have travelled in our own special field, the more firmly have we been convinced that the minor message of beautiful laces is intimately intermingled with the more majestic purposes of architecture and the decorative arts.

The intimate relation of the window laces to other decorative accessories is not always appreciated, as their haphazard selection too often indicates. Well chosen and well designed laces do not aim to compete in any way with the details of general interior decoration. On the contrary, when correctly used, their presence is felt only as an attractive but indefinable contribution to the charm of the total



The illustrations on this and on the opposite page show specially designed small scale drawings for panels of lace for execution abroad. There are practically no limitations as to design and style when the medium is fine Flanders or Italian lace.

effect. While in themselves altogether unobtrusive, good lace treatments of window openings help to bring into harmony floor and side walls, ceiling



The period of the Italian Renaissance was rich in the kind of ornament that can be most happily translated into lace. A small scale drawing of a design of Renaissance inspiration is shown above.

and door spaces and the movable furnishings of the residence or apartment, or again of the hotel. Nor does their function end there; to the passerby outside they carry a message full of suggestion to the well informed of the good taste and character of the household within. In their very colorlessness, or rather, absence of definable tint, they possess something of the value and purpose of a well proportioned mat to a water color drawing or pastel. As though borne on the air, their pattern carries in filmy suggestiveness a reflection of the prevailing ornamental thought of the apartments, however interpreted and expressed, whether carved in wood or stone, or woven in brocade or carpet pile, or set forth in paint and paper.

The soft and translucent fabric of lace possesses a truly ingratiating quality that is almost a caress; it is never formally stiff nor gratingly harsh, yet never in disorder. In fine, it combines to carry out that spirit of restfulness and welcome that pervades the tastefully decorated room.

Only a real art training and the hard bought knowledge of what constitutes beauty and fitness in decoration qualifies the maker of lace decorations to produce something worthy to hang at the windows of a beautiful dwelling. One may even, in such an airy medium of lace, suggest beauty of composition, graciousness of line, and a fine restraint in the use of ornament, and indeed the expert must do this if he hopes to realize the highest ideals of the lace making craft.



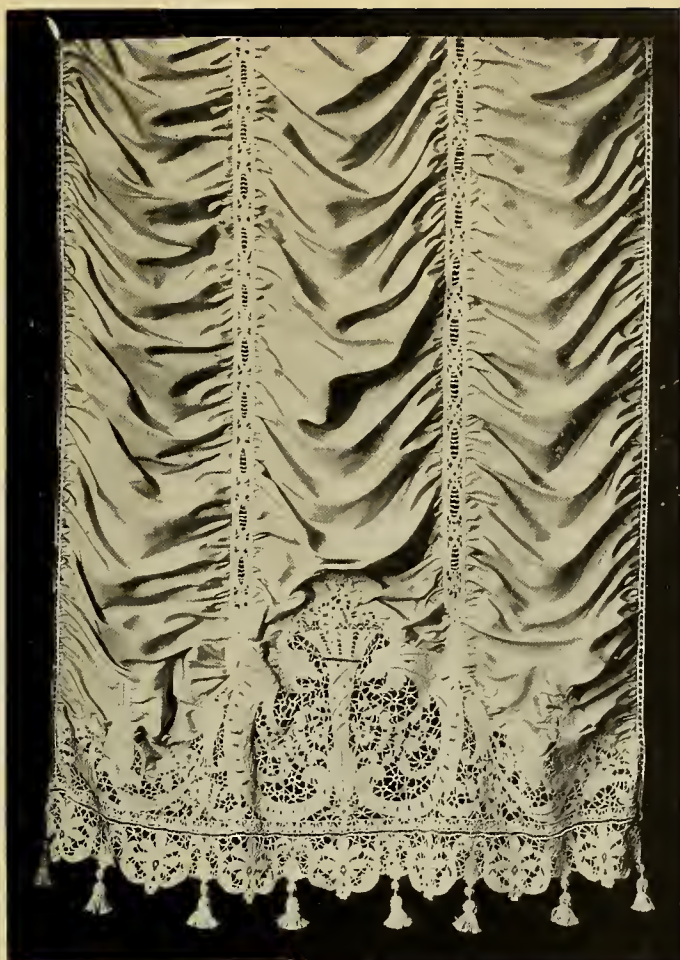
A draped silk and lace shade - Every scroll and flower, every stitch and knot, was indicated in full size on our large scale patterns, which were sent to Europe and the laces after being most sympathetically made, were duly returned to us without a single mistake or imperfection.

IV

Art is needed in this trade to a degree we realize best when we observe the product of those manufacturers who are unable to step beyond the sheer commercial precincts of their trade. But, having determined that this is really an art craft, we should follow it as such, and we should bring to its service the best we know and feel of things artistic; then we raise and dignify our task and lead it into a certain relation with the far greater art of architecture.

But there must be something like a community of aim and of spirit and a common sense of those things so fine

A lace panel of somewhat formal character but graceful proportions. Every medallion in such an arrangement is made to count, and deliver its full message of beauty.



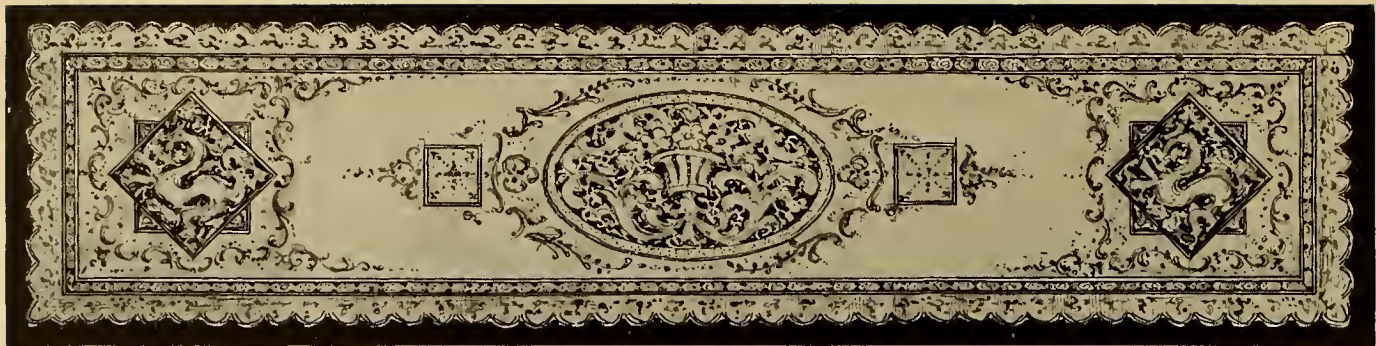
A draped silk and lace shade—This was made for a series of windows in a salon done in the Francois I period and designed to harmonize with this environment. The shade shown opposite was for the windows of a French music room in the style of Louis XVI, each one of the series having a different arrangement of musical instruments in the oval medallion.

and so high that bring architecture into accord with lofty aspirations.

But laces possess intrinsically something more than an appeal; for they have that which dignifies them and sets them apart from purely feminine adornments. Beyond their use as lovely screens at doors and windows, they have special significance of their own in the complete decorative scheme. They are not as chairs to sit upon, rugs to tread on, or tables to lay food upon; they carry thought and fancy higher. In their diaphanous substance we may discover something of the essential spirit of beauty that too often eludes us in the more material objects of the



This window panel serves to demonstrate how the most various types of lace and most diverse shapes may be wrought into a really pleasing design when a thorough understanding of the material is coupled with the good taste of the artist.



Sideboard cover of laces and embroidery.

room. Only when we have lived with beautiful laces at our windows can we realize what their presence means. Only when the window openings are left bare and gaping do we understand the ineffable loss even their brief absence can entail.

They fill a niche in the economy of the home's furnishings that no other thing can fittingly supplant; they do not hem us in or contract our outlook; rather they lead us to the infinite regions of light and air; and—colorless themselves—through their delicate texture permeate the source of all there is of color in the room; the light of the sun in the heavens.



"In all the arts and acts of life the secret of high success will be found, not in a fretful and various excellence but in a quiet singleness of justly chosen aim."

∞
"The true artist has that inspiration in him which is above all law, or rather which is continually working out such magnificent and perfect obedience to supreme law as can in no wise be measured by line and rule. There are more laws perceived and fulfilled in the single trade of a great workman than could be written in a volume."

∞
"It is not often that any idea of utility has power to enhance the true impressions of beauty; but it is possible that the enormous importance of the art of weaving to mankind may give some interest, if not actual attractiveness, to any type or image of the invention to which we owe at once our comfort and our pride.

"But the more profound reason lies in the innate love of mystery and unity; in the joy that the human mind has in contemplating any kind of maze or entanglement, so long as it can discern, through its confusion, any guiding clue or connecting plan: a pleasure increased and solemnized by some dim feeling of the setting forth, by such symbols, of the intricacy, and alternate rise and fall, subjection and supremacy, of human fortune; the

'Weave the warp, and weave the woof,'
of Fate and Time.

"But be this as it may, the fact is that we are never tired of contemplating this woven involution; and that in some degree, the sublime pleasure which we have in watching the branches of trees, the intertwining of the grass, and the tracery of the higher clouds, is owing to it, not less than that which we receive from the fine meshes of the robe, the braiding of the hair, and the various glittering of the linked net or wreathed chain."

—John Ruskin

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